The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Guinea-Bissau to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Mutaboba, who is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Bissau.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Her Excellency Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, in her capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mutaboba.

Mr. Mutaboba: I am honoured to brief the Security Council on key developments in Guinea-Bissau. My last briefing was on 3 November 2011 (see S/PV.6648). The reporting period has largely been marked by a political transition that resulted from the medical evacuation and subsequent death, on 9 January 2012, of President Malam Bacai Sanhá.

My briefing today will focus on the challenging political and security environment stemming from the current political transition process aimed at restoring full constitutional order. Such order has now become a crucial priority in terms of meeting the emerging challenges and identifying ways forward on vital national action plans, particularly through national dialogue, with respect to the implementation of security sector reform (SSR) and the fight against impunity, drug trafficking and organized crime.

The late President Sanhá had consulted and set the date of the much-awaited national conference for 14 to 18 January 2012. However, his medical evacuation on 22 November 2011 delayed the preparations for the event, which has now been overtaken by the focus on the political transition following his death.

On 26 December, the security environment was unsettled by an armed attack on the General Staff Armory, with a reported removal of weapons. The Government denied a coup attempt, although on 30 December, Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior said that there had been a plot to kill him and the Chief of Defence Staff, General Indjai. Twenty-four military officers, including Navy Chief Rear Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, and one civilian were detained. Eight of the detainees were subsequently released. In the wake of the incident, two people were killed — a member of the rapid intervention police, and a police commander, Major Yaya Dabo, who was assassinated while on his way to surrender to the authorities.

Although the national conference was postponed indefinitely following the death of President Sanhá, work on technical preparations has continued, including on enhancing the inclusiveness of the process. The future of the initiative will depend on consultations under a new president.

On the political transition, following President Sanhá's funeral on 15 January, interim President Raimundo Pereira held wide-ranging consultations with registered political parties, the National Electoral Commission and some members of civil society, which led to a consensus to hold early presidential elections on 18 March. In support of the process, international partners provided financial and/or in-kind contributions to cover the budget of $4.9 million, either through the United Nations Development Programme basket fund or directly to the National Electoral Commission. The consensus on the date of 18 March was later challenged by some of its strongest advocates among political parties in protest over the inability to update the voter registry, which was last updated in 2008.

The Supreme Court cleared 10 of 14 candidates to run in the elections, including former President Kumba Yalá and the ruling candidate of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Carlos Gomes Júnior. Some political parties argued that Mr. Gomes Júnior's candidacy was not constitutional, since the interim President was not constitutionally allowed to accept his resignation as Prime Minister. One of the 10 candidates, Braima Dialó,

of the African National Congress, dropped out of the race on 5 March, claiming a lack of conditions for free, fair and transparent elections.

Preparations for the elections were marred by violence on 20 February, when youths protesting their non-registration as voters in front of the offices of the National Electoral Commission were charged by the police, who in turn were manhandled and disarmed by the military. Subsequently, a joint command of the police and the military, with permanent technical support from the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) within the framework of security sector reform, worked on security for the electoral process, with structures in all regions. The United Nations also provided multifaceted technical support for the entire electoral process.

The election campaign process from 2 to 16 March was peaceful. On 18 March, the first round of the presidential election was held in a peaceful and orderly manner. No major security incidents were reported. The killing of a former military intelligence chief, Samba Djaló, outside his home in Bissau by uniformed individuals marred an otherwise peaceful election day. Investigations into the killing are ongoing and linkages with the electoral process were refuted by many, including the President of the National Electoral Commission and the spokesperson of the armed forces. In a similar development, on 21 March, the former Chief of Defence Staff, Vice-Admiral Zamora Induta, who had met Sambo Djaló a few hours before the latter was killed, sought refuge inside the European Union (EU) premises, claiming fear for his life.

The African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the West African Economic and Monetary Union deployed a total of 154 election observers throughout the country. In addition, there were three electoral technical experts from South Africa and two from the EU. The observers were unanimous in their assessment that the polls had been free, fair and transparent.

On 20 March, a coalition of five candidates who had scored less than Carlos Gomes Júnior at the polls, including Kumba Yalá, claimed that there had been fraud at the polls and called for the nullification of the results and for fresh polls following the establishment of a new voter registry. Sources close to Kumba Yalá also indicated that he would not participate in a run-off election.

On 21 March, the National Electoral Commission indicated that since no candidate had obtained 50 per cent plus one vote in the election, a run-off would be held on 22 April between Carlos Gomes Júnior and the second placed candidate, Kumba Yalá. Voter turnout was 55 per cent, lower than in the previous elections.

I would like now to turn to developments in the core areas of concern to the mandate of UNIOGBIS.

First, with regard to security sector reform, the initial boost to consultations between the CPLP, ECOWAS and the Government of Guinea-Bissau on a memorandum of understanding for the implementation of the SSR road map appears to have dissipated. As an alternative option, ECOWAS and the Government undertook to sign a bilateral memorandum of understanding in furtherance of the implementation of the road map. However, progress was also interrupted by the political transition.

UNIOGBIS continued to support the Government on resource mobilization efforts for the five-year special pension fund for members of the defence and security institutions. Cape Verde pledged as much as the Government of Guinea-Bissau, that is, $4.5 million, with $1 million to be disbursed in early 2012. On 30 January, on the margins of the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, in his capacity as outgoing Chair of the African Union, convened an African Union partners' breakfast workshop in support of the Guinea-Bissau SSR process, where further pledges of assistance were indicated, including from Equatorial Guinea. On 10 February, the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations signed a Peacebuilding Fund grant agreement for $2,803,378, making the United Nations the first international partner to contribute to the pension fund. However, Government plans to launch the operation on 23 January were delayed in the wake of the political transition. Demobilization is a crucial step to trigger the rejuvenation of the armed forces in Guinea-Bissau. Its implementation is equally delayed.

On police reform, UNIOGBIS continued to provide technical support for enhanced community

policing through the establishment of model police stations, with the assistance of the Peacebuilding Fund, as well as support in the areas of training, vetting and certification. Special concern is also being paid to gender-related matters, including gender-based violence, including a focus on preventing and combating child-trafficking. Similar efforts are ongoing with respect to reform in the justice sector, while the refurbishment of military barracks and the provision of equipment and prospective training plans are being undertaken with the assistance of the Angolan Mission to Support Security and Defence Sector Reform in Guinea-Bissau.

On the fight against impunity, in February 2012, three suspects were charged with qualified homicide, damage and grave physical offences in connection with the investigation into the assassination of General Tagme Na Waie, on 1 March 2009. The case is to be submitted to the Bissau criminal court for trial. Some suspects were cleared. As to the investigation into the assassination of President João Bernardo Vieira, on 2 March 2009, the Prosecutor General has yet to hear key witnesses who are outside the country.

Also, the dual assassinations of June 2009 have been referred to the Supreme Court. Investigations have reportedly been opened into the assassinations of Major Yaya Dabó, on 27 December 2011, and Colonel Samba Djaló, on 18 March 2012.

On the fight against illicit drug trafficking, there has been progress in the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative, notably in the functioning of the transnational crime unit, which, since the end of 2011, has been carrying out reporting activities, produced primary intelligence reports on international drug trafficking and participated in operational activities.

The implementation of the 2011 to 2014 national plan to combat illicit drug trafficking, and its political declaration, jointly designed by the Government, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, has been hampered by financial constraints, in spite of existing capacity to implement it. The deficient judiciary system adds to an already long list of other collateral issues that impedes properly combating impunity, drug-trafficking and organized crime.

On benchmarks, I would also like to report on the progress made on the implementation of the United Nations joint strategic workplan in Guinea-Bissau. Approximately 78 per cent of selected indicators are either on track or likely to be achieved within the time frame of 2017. On 22 February, the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations system signed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the period 2013-2017 as the integrated strategic framework. The UNDAF for the period from 2013 to 2017 defines the collective, coherent and integrated response of the United Nations to the priorities and needs of the country within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and is aligned with the second generation of the national poverty reduction strategy paper covering the period from 2011 to 2015. It will contribute to addressing the challenges of peacebuilding and development during the period from 2013 to 2017.

I would like to make several observations. The death of President Sanhá, who was a moderating force with considerable influence on the country's fractious political and military actors, has been a blow to peacebuilding plans and programmes in Guinea-Bissau. Most of 2012 will be taken up by, first, elections and issues related to the presidential election process, which started in January and could be completed by the end of May 2012, when a new President is likely to be sworn in; secondly, the PAIGC congress scheduled for July; and, thirdly, legislative elections towards the end of the year, probably around November. We had factored into our planning that the political focus from the second half of 2012 onwards would be increasingly on the legislative elections, with a clear impact on the progress of the activities of the United Nations system as well as of the State. The early presidential election has been an unanticipated, severe disruption.

The immediate impact of the early elections should not be underestimated. The Government has been severely constrained since January because, first, the powers of the interim President are constitutionally circumscribed and, secondly, the candidacy of the Prime Minister and the involvement of other officeholders in the campaign have further significantly affected Government business. That highlights the extent to which the legal framework in Guinea-Bissau needs fundamental revision, as the current Constitution has totally failed to provide clear guidance on fundamental issues relating to how, in situations such as this, holders of sovereign organs of the State should proceed in order to avoid vacuums that compromise the normal functioning of the State.

A case in point is the situation relating to the 2012 budget, which cannot be signed until there is an elected President; that has a number of consequences. These problems, jointly with other recent challenges, point to the already expressed need for the Security Council to address constitutional review in Guinea-Bissau. That is now imperative.

The national conference is a parliamentary initiative whose patron is the President of the Republic. Implementation this year depends on harmonization between the new President, Government and Parliament, bearing in mind the fact that the parliamentary term also expires in a few months' time. The window of opportunity for a national conference in this legislature is therefore quite narrow, but the task is not impossible.

The military events that took place on 26 December are symptomatic of a military leadership divided and lacking a uniform commitment to republican values. SSR therefore remains the cornerstone reform without which democracy and stability in Guinea-Bissau cannot be consolidated. The leadership of the new President, who is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, will be crucial.

SSR also requires convergence among the Government, international partners and the beneficiaries in the defence and security sectors on realistic and achievable targets and sequencing. The remaining obstacles to a finalized memorandum of understanding need to be resolved early in the new presidency. It is encouraging that various bilateral and multilateral international partners remain committed to assisting Guinea-Bissau in the implementation of its SSR strategy, but fine-tuning their roles remains a challenge.

Nevertheless, UNIOGBIS has been providing continuous technical assistance to the Government on coordination through working groups in the areas of defence, security and justice reforms, bringing together national and international partners. However, engagement by national and international actors needs to be further enhanced. National and international partners must be commended for having organized the early presidential election within such a short time frame. The election is an important milestone in the process of restoring constitutional order. A newly elected President must strive to be accommodative and not sacrifice the visible, considerable progress achieved in the last three years.

The President: I thank Mr. Mutaboba for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Viotti.

Mrs. Viotti: I thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, for his briefing and for his work as Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). I also welcome the presence among us of His Excellency Ambassador João Soares Da Gama, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau.

Since I last briefed the Council, Guinea-Bissau has made important strides towards sustainable peace. During the past months, the country's institutions have been able to maintain political stability and sustain economic growth. They have also managed to withstand two potentially destabilizing events, which occurred a few days apart: the incident of 26 December 2011 and the demise of President Malam Bacai Sanhá, on 9 January. The national authorities and the people of Guinea-Bissau overcame those difficult moments with political maturity and in full respect of the relevant provisions of the country's Constitution.

When facing the unexpected challenge of dealing with the presidential succession, the national leadership opted for steering the process in an inclusive and consultative manner. Interim President Raimundo Pereira opened up broad consultations with all political forces, including the opposition. In accordance with the Constitution, he scheduled the polls within 60 days of the President's demise, notwithstanding the huge logistical and financial challenges that that decision entailed.

The Guinea-Bissau configuration has endeavoured to extend immediate and concrete support to the country at this most delicate juncture. It met on 6 February to exchange views and to promote support and resource mobilization for the elections. The international community's timely and generous response has demonstrated its confidence in Guinea-Bissau during these challenging times.

According to electoral observers, including from the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the first round of the presidential elections was considered to have been free, fair and transparent.

It is crucial now that all stakeholders, especially the two run-off candidates and their supporters, demonstrate political maturity, maintain a peaceful environment and refrain from any action that could lead to unnecessary tension. It is important that electoral grievances be resolved through legally established channels, with full respect for the rule of law.

While supporting Guinea-Bissau in its efforts to hold the anticipated elections, the configuration has not lost sight of other peacebuilding priorities, such as security sector reform. The launch of the pension fund for the armed forces and the security forces remains one of the highest priorities for peace consolidation and stability in the country. It is very important that the new Government, once installed, pursue the launch and implementation of the fund as a matter of priority.

As I highlighted in previous briefings, an area in which Guinea-Bissau has certainly made remarkable strides is macroeconomic management and economic revitalization. This month, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conducted the fourth review of the country's performance under the Extended Credit Facility, as approved in May 2010. The mission concluded that Guinea-Bissau had made further progress in stabilizing its economy, reaching a growth rate of 5.3 per cent and meeting most structural benchmarks. The IMF team encouraged the Government to pursue its reform efforts and noted that political stability and improved security would be critical for sustained economic growth.

As the international community, we must continue to support Guinea-Bissau so that such achievements can help to create a virtuous cycle of stability and growth. That is why sustained efforts also need to be geared towards other peacebuilding priorities, among which is capacity-building to strengthen the justice sector, to consolidate the rule of law and to fight drug trafficking, as well as initiatives that address social challenges, including critical shortcomings in the delivery of basic social services and the creation of opportunities for youth employment and empowerment.

We look forward to the successful and peaceful completion of the current electoral process and to continuing our proactive engagement with the new authorities on our joint peacebuilding agenda.

The President: I thank Mrs. Viotti for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Da Gama (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to express my sincere thanks for the honour that you grant me, Mr. President, by giving me the floor before Council members, whom we would like to thank for their commitment to and understanding of the situation in our country. We would also like to commend Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), and Mrs. Viotti for their remarkable work towards the peacebuilding and development of Guinea-Bissau.

This statement comes at a time when my country, Guinea-Bissau, is in the middle of an electoral period brought about by the passing on 9 January of President Malam Bacai Sanhá, who strove for dialogue, peace and development in Guinea-Bissau. As stipulated in the Constitution, after the death of the President of the Republic, early presidential elections should have taken place within 60 days following a series of internal political consultations so as to respect the will expressed by the country's various political parties. The Acting President of the Republic set the date of 18 March for the holding of the early presidential elections, thus upholding the Republic's Constitution.

However, the actual organization of those elections was not easy owing to the serious issue of their financing, in particular because of the very short two-month period for their organization and the country's financial difficulties. But, fortunately, thanks to the resolve of the national authorities and the international community's tireless commitment to help Guinea-Bissau to pursue the path of strengthening its young democracy and respecting the constitutional order, my country was able to gain the necessary financial and logistical assistance to hold those elections. They took place on 18 March, as planned, preceded by an exemplary electoral and incident-free

campaign. As a result, I would like to take the opportunity to reiterate my Government's gratitude to all countries and organizations that kindly once again stood alongside us during that electoral period.

Following the voting, international observers, in particular from the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, a group of 10 parliamentarians from the United Kingdom and some from the European Union and South Africa, commended the peaceful climate in which the elections took place. They all described them as free, fair and transparent.

On 21 March, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) announced the provisional official results of the vote, which placed the former Prime Minister, Mr. Carlos Gomes Júnior, in the lead, with more than 48 per cent of the vote, followed by the former President of the Republic, Mr. Kumba Yalá, with more than 23 per cent of the vote. Given that neither of those two candidates gained more than 50 per cent of the required votes, it is provided for that they go to a second round, which, in principle, will be held towards the end of April.

Speaking even before the publication of the provisional results by the NEC, a group of five candidates, including the contender with the second-highest number of votes, made it known that it would not accept the results of the elections, citing irregularities and fraud, and requested that the elections be annulled. Once the provisional results were published, the five candidates lodged an appeal with the NEC on the basis of the same arguments, underscoring, furthermore, the lack of updated electoral registries that included new voters who had reached 18 years of age. At the same time, Mr. Kumba Yalá, as the candidate with the second-highest number of votes, announced that he would not participate in the second round of the election.

In that regard, it should be underscored that the NEC issued its decision yesterday, on 27 March, stating that those allegations were ill founded and that that group of candidates had a final recourse to the Supreme Court of Justice, in accordance with the law in force.

Despite the slightly tense atmosphere owing to the refusal of Mr. Kumba Yalá, supported by the four other candidates, to participate in the second round, we hope that decisions issued by the competent electoral bodies, namely, the NEC and the Supreme Court of Justice, will be respected and that, in the interests of the country, the people's will and good sense will prevail and that the second round of elections will indeed take place.

Despite the current election challenge, the Government of Guinea-Bissau remains convinced that reform of the defence and security sector is crucial to peacebuilding in the country, and it is its foremost priority. We therefore hope that conditions will be rapidly met so as to move to implementing that reform through the upcoming launch of the special pension fund, which will enable the demobilization process of elements of the armed forces and security forces to start.

In that regard, we hope to receive as soon as possible the release of funds pledged by our partners. We also hope that other actors will join us in that step. Nevertheless, I would recall that the Government of Guinea-Bissau, under His Excellency Mr. Carlos Gomes Júnior, with the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners, had to agree to tremendous sacrifices that, to date, have enabled us to see very positive results in terms of the recovery of the national economy and public funds administration, as well as in the areas of infrastructure and combating drug trafficking, among others.

National dialogue remains one of Guinea-Bissau's priorities. In that regard, the National Conference on Reconciliation, which is to bring together political actors, civil society, elements of the defence and security forces, religious leaders and others, set up by President Bacai Sanhá, will indeed take place with the election of the Republic's new President. That will enable the people of Guinea-Bissau to freely express their opinion and to find a lasting path of understanding on issues affecting our country.

I would therefore like to conclude by reiterating my Government's gratitude to the international community for its tireless support to Guinea-Bissau to date. We ask it to continue to provide its valuable assistance to us in the context of peacebuilding and development in our country.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.